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## Evidence of a Clovis Occupation at the Topper Site, 38AL23, Allendale County, South Carolina

*Albert C. Goodyear and Kenn Steffy*

The Topper site is a multicomponent prehistoric chert quarry and quarry-related habitation site located on a terrace-hillside of the Savannah River in South Carolina. It has been known to be a chert quarry since 1981, when a local resident named David Topper showed A. C. Goodyear and T. Charles the site (Goodyear and Charles 1984). In 1985 it was included as part of a suite of chert quarries mapped and tested for Allendale County and nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. At that time it was considered a probable Paleoindian site along with at least two other known Paleoindian quarries (Goodyear et al. 1985). Chert can be seen today eroding from the hillside overlooking the terrace as well as in a small creek bed. The chert is essentially all of one type as described in petrologic studies by Upchurch (1984), who has defined it as a member of the Allendale chert quarry cluster.

Test excavations conducted in 1984, 1985, and 1986 documented the stratigraphy and occupational history and explicitly searched for Paleoindian lithic materials. Work resumed there in 1998 as part of the Allendale Paleoindian Expedition. New discoveries in South America and Virginia between 1986 and 1998 prompted excavations in 1998 at Topper below what was thought to be the Clovis-age level. This resulted in the discovery of an unusual lithic assemblage located as much as a meter below the Clovis level associated with what is now known to be a Pleistocene floodplain (T2)

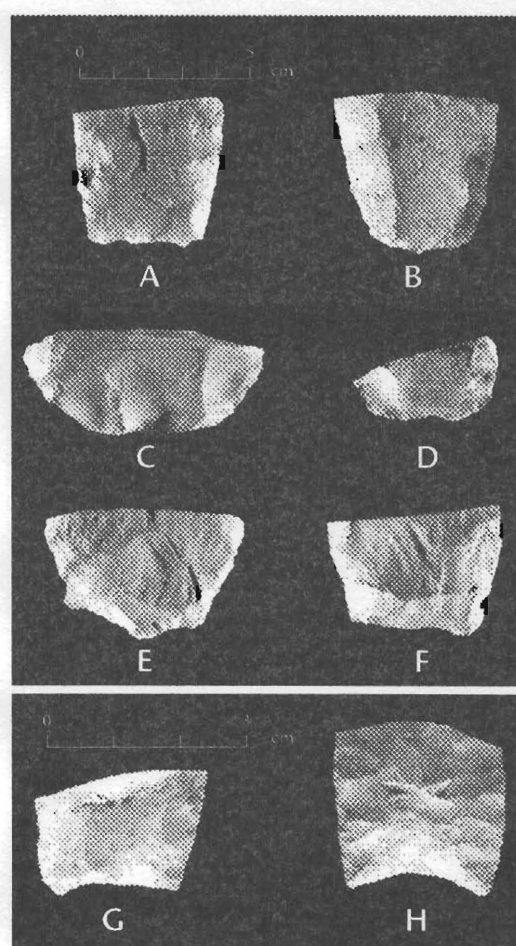
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(Goodyear 2001a, 2001b; Waters 2002). The upper meter of sediments, which contains a complete cultural sequence from Clovis to Mississippian, is colluvial in origin resulting from slopewash down the hillside (Foss 2002; Waters 2002). Based on OSL dating, this slopewash began to form about 15.2 ka yrs.; above that, in the base of the colluvium, an OSL date of 13.5 ka yrs was obtained (Forman 2002), which is Clovis in age.

Evidence of Clovis at Topper has been based primarily on the recognition of the typical transversely flaked and end-thinned biface preforms (Figure 1, A–F). The characteristic expanding blade margins are present even at an early production stage, yielding what Morrow (1995) has referred to as the “row-boat”-shaped preform. End thinning resulting in reverse hinge fractures is present; other preforms were ruined by *outré passé* errors. Until the 2002 season, these bifaces were found lightly distributed over the excavation area, making it difficult to recognize a spatially concentrated Clovis occupation. In



**Figure 1.** A–F, Clovis preforms in various stages; G, Clovis base; H, lanceolate point base. Photo by SCLAA-Daryl Miller.

2002, two different operations on the northern end of the site encountered dense cultural layers of obvious Clovis lithic technology (Goodyear 2002/2003), including the base of a Clovis point (Figure 1G). A second lanceolate base, found on the southern end in the 2002 block excavation, appears to be a basally thinned Paleoindian point (Figure 1H). It was found in what is normally the early-Archaic level; however, there appears to be some stratigraphic mixing between Clovis and early Archaic. No diagnostic post-Clovis Paleoindian points or even Dalton points have been found in 344 m<sup>2</sup> of excavation. It may be that early-Archaic Taylor people were walking on the previous Clovis land surface. This suggests that the sedimentation rate on the hillside was heavily influenced by quarrying and human foot traffic.

Clovis lithics recovered in 2002 from the northern end of the site are dominated by normal core reduction debris and also include numerous prismatic blades representing the initial production of blades and blade cores including bladelets (Goodyear 2002/2003). The presence of flake tools including unifaces indicates that other manufacturing activities were carried out in addition to flintworking. Excavation efforts in the 2003 season will concentrate on recovering more Clovis lithic technology from this dense zone.

We thank the Clariant Corporation, owners of the Topper site, for their interest and support in field investigations. The members of the Allendale Paleoindian Excavation who have helped gather this data are acknowledged, as well as several colleagues who have reviewed the Topper lithics, especially Julie Morrow, Dennis Stanford, and Mike Waters.

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